

Now departing: Paine Field Director Dave Waggoner headed for retirement

More than 20 years after he landed the job as Paine Field Director, Dave Waggoner is turning in his wings. Next on the horizon for the 26-year Navy veteran: Retirement.

During his 22-year tenure at Paine Field, Waggoner has helped airport revenues triple, seen locally based aircraft increase by more than 50 percent, and been instrumental in securing more than \$85 million in Federal Aviation Administration grants. Thanks to his leadership, Paine Field has been named the FAA's Airport of the Year twice, in 1997 and 2003. In 2013, Waggoner himself was honored as Airport Executive of the Year by the Northwest chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives .

Of course, if you ask Waggoner, he won't take credit for his years of hard work, preferring instead to put the spotlight on his great staff.

"They are the heart of the team," he said. "Nearly everything we do takes working together and collaboration. Our work has really benefitted by the support we have enjoyed from the whole county team."



The admiration is mutual: Everyone who has worked with Waggoner has nothing but praise for his accomplishments. Susan Kern, Paine Field's business manager, complimented his ability to help people succeed, keep a sense of humor, and encourage a supportive, family-style atmosphere in the office.

"I've been working full-time since I was 20 and have had a number of bosses," Kern said. "I've been at the airport 16 years and Dave's been the best boss I ever had. I will dearly miss him."

Former County Executive Director Peter Camp echoed Kern's sentiments.

"Dave has an amazing ability to inspire loyalty in his department, and to calmly and professionally talk to anyone about contentious issues – like commercial air service – even if they're very upset," Camp said.

Though commercial air service has been one of Paine Field's most contentious issues, Waggoner has handled community concerns with aplomb. Waggoner's nomination for Airport Executive of the Year sums it up:

"[Waggoner] has fostered great respectful relationships with local community leaders who are often times at odds with the airport over noise and environmental issues. ... One of the greatest compliments paid to Dave has been from concerned (often angry) neighbors of the airport ... Numerous people have stood up in public meetings to decry the potential for development, but then declare how much they appreciate the time Dave has taken to talk to them individually and hear their concerns and viewpoints."

Waggoner has overseen many changes in 22 years at the controls of Paine Field. His vision has led to the Future of Flight Aviation Center and Boeing Tour, which now draws more than 250,000 visitors per year.

“Taking multiple tours of the Boeing factory is one of the most interesting things I’ve been able to do at Paine Field,” Waggoner said. “It truly is a world wonder.”

With accomplishments, though, come challenges. In addition to managing concerns surrounding commercial air service, Waggoner had to contend with a major runway glitch that could have closed the airport for an extended time.

“Several years ago, while we were doing a complete renovation of the main runway, we encountered a problem with the new asphalt: It wouldn’t harden and had to be removed,” he said. “We worked with the engineer, contractor and FAA to research the problem and were able to find a solution and get our runway back into top shape.”

Though he’ll miss his airport team, his airport tenants and neighbors, he’s looking forward to exploring the region with his wife, PJ, in their new 5th wheel RV. And he’s leaving with a sense of pride, knowing that Paine Field has an excellent record of providing safe facilities and services, while meeting customer needs.



A bit about Dave

Prior to his career in Snohomish County, Dave Waggoner served for 26 years in the Navy. He flew the A-6 Intruder at NAS Whidbey and in Oceana, VA, and served as operations officer on the USS Carl Vinson CVN-70 and as commander of NAS Whidbey, before retiring as a captain in 1992. During his time in the Navy, he attended the Naval Postgraduate School, graduating with a Master’s degree in Finance. He met former Paine Field manager Don Bakken while researching ways to respond to community concerns about overflight and noise, and upon learning that Bakken was nearing retirement, applied for the Director position. Dave has served on multiple boards and committees in Snohomish County. He is happily married, the father of two children and four grandchildren.

The county is working with Prothman Company, 371 NE Gilman Blvd., Suite 350, Issaquah, to manage the recruitment of a new airport director.

Want to learn more about Paine Field? Discover all the airport has to offer online at www.paineairport.com.